

2017 Massachusetts Community Transportation Coordination Conference Partnering with On-Demand Services

Presenters

- Sandy Robinson, Needham Community Council
- Ben Schutzman, MBTA
- Dr. Jermaine Williams, North Shore Community College

Facilitator

- Rachel Fichtenbaum, MassMobility

Needham Community Council

- Not enough volunteer drivers so they started using Uber/Lyft. The community council pays for the rides as a back up to their volunteer drivers. Seniors are asked to call 3 days before their medical appointment to schedule transportation. If no driver is available they inform the person that they can arrange for an Uber or Lyft ride. The person is told to call 5 minutes before they are ready with coat on. The ride arrives within 3 minutes of the call. The receptionist at the medical office calls at the end of the appointment to request the return trip. A follow-up survey is sent. The average ride costs \$8.

MBTA

- The RIDE serves the greater Boston area while it is important it is a costly service and does not always provide the best customer experience due to the required advance booking. The use of Uber allows customers to take more trips and is less costly. One thousand riders currently use the app. Customer pays the first \$2 of the fare, the MBTA pays \$13 and then the customer pays any additional costs beyond \$15. Uber is providing smartphones for customers that do not have them.

North Shore Community College

- Wanted to provide greater access to education from Cape Ann to Lynn. Students were lacking personal transportation and had no access to public transportation to the campus that offers classes towards degrees for higher paying jobs. This partnership allows for a more equitable education experience. Students agree to a waiver and are given a promo code to enter into the Uber app. Students get to a transportation hub at the North Shore Mall or the Beverly train station, and an Uber from this point to the Danvers campus.

Concerns

- MBTA:
 - Ability to book a trip when needed not relying on a time estimate from advance booking. Per trip averages \$9, customers are taking more trips so the overall savings is not as significant.
 - Recruiting customers. No smart phones or don't use apps. Looking to change and adopt use of Uber Pool. Pressure Uber and Lyft to do what the other does. Customization for the individual.
- North Shore Community College:

- Concerns from parents and staff around safety. Created presentation on safety features.
- Getting the information to students. Marketing and potentially subsidizing the entire ride for those that can't afford it.
- Needham Community Council:
 - Older adults concerned about safety. Had their staff use Uber so that they could talk about it with seniors. Local council on aging trained seniors on using the app so they could use Uber for other non-medical trips.
 - Limitations - Reporting from Uber. Lyft shares metrics easier.

Final Thoughts

- Needham Community Council:
 - Uber/Lyft don't answer calls and take a long time to respond to emails.
- MBTA:
 - Don't expect that partnerships with Uber/Lyft will replace 100% of your transit needs. Reach out to the MBTA for support in contacting Uber/Lyft.
- Needham Community Council:
 - Push the boundaries. North shore CC was the first higher education institution to partner with Uber.

Q&A

- From the Department of Developmental Service – The Commuter Rail Salem North is closing for the summer. Has anyone spoken with Uber/Lyft about this?
 - North Shore Community College – School will be closed for the summer.
- One consumer shared that she used Uber to get to her doctor's appointment and felt very safe.
- From the Department of Developmental Service – Some clients on PT-1's go to work using Dial-A- Ride. How can they use Uber/Lyft for medical appointments?
 - Director of Human Service Transportation Office – MassHealth has not approved the use of Uber/Lyft for members with Pt-1s. Perhaps in the future.
- The MBTA can control costs by adding a taxi like solution in the next contract round. We all recognize that there are opportunities to change our business models, brokerages etc.
- From a Council on Aging – Can Uber offer assistance with walkers, wheelchairs, etc.?
 - Needham Community Council – We can call driver once the ride is assigned to ask but Uber is a curb to curb service.
 - MBTA – Uber is not required to offer assistance. We encourage riders to call the driver. Drivers are good human beings who want to do their best.
 - Lyft Rider – Uber and Lyft need to smooth out wheelchair van availability.